



May 30, 2001

Mr. Joe Jackson
Assistant City Attorney
City of College Station
P.O. Box 9960
College Station, Texas 77842

OR2001-2224

Dear Mr. Jackson:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 147759.

The City of College Station (the "city") received a request for information relating to Police Service No. 00-013289 concerning the death of a particular person. You have released the basic information, pursuant section 552.108(c), and the autopsy report. You assert that the remaining requested information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101, 552.108, and 552.114 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and have reviewed the documents submitted.

First, the submitted information includes records that are governed by the Texas Medical Practice Act (the "MPA"), chapter 159 of the Occupations Code. Because the submitted documents contain confidential medical records, section 552.101 excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." This section encompasses information protected by other statutes. Section 159.002 of the MPA provides:

(b) A record of the identity, diagnosis, evaluation, or treatment of a patient by a physician that is created or maintained by a physician is confidential and privileged and may not be disclosed except as provided by this chapter.

(c) A person who receives information from a confidential communication or record as described by this chapter, other than a person listed in Section 159.004 who is acting on the patient's behalf, may not disclose the

information except to the extent that disclosure is consistent with the authorized purposes for which the information was first obtained.

The medical records must be released upon the patient's or the patient's personal representative's signed, written consent, provided that the consent specifies (1) the information to be covered by the release, (2) reasons or purposes for the release, and (3) the person to whom the information is to be released. Occ. Code §§ 159.004, .005. Section 159.002(c) also requires that any subsequent release of medical records be consistent with the purposes for which the governmental body obtained the records. Open Records Decision No. 565 at 7 (1990). Medical records may be released only as provided under the MPA. Open Records Decision No. 598 (1991).

Next, we consider your section 552.108 claim for the rest of the information. Section 552.108(a)(2) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information concerning an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication. You assert that Police Service No. 00-013289 pertains to a case that concluded in a result other than conviction or deferred adjudication. Therefore, the city may withhold the requested documents in Exhibits 4-137 and 143-224 from public disclosure under section 552.108(a)(2). Because section 552.108 is dispositive, we do not address your other arguments.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental

body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the General Services Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Yen-Ha Le
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

YHL/LKM\seg

Ref: ID# 147759

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Michael Galvin
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(w/o enclosure)